

Town of Newport
Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Commissioners
June 25, 2020
7:00 pm

Mayor Spencer called all to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.

He announced the meeting was in compliance with the Delaware Open Meeting Act.

Attendance: Mayor Michael Spencer, Commissioner Flo Czerwinski, Commissioner CarolAnn Gretz, Commissioner Michele MacDonald, Police Chief Mark Wohnner, Town Manager Wendy King. Vice Mayor John Joswick and Solicitor N. Christopher Griffiths were absent.

Minutes from the meeting of February 20, 2020, were approved via motion by Commissioner MacDonald and seconded by Commissioner Gretz. All ayes.

Correspondence – Mayor Spencer received an email stating that Apex Piping Systems was changing its operating name to Apex Mechanical and Fabrication and there would be an upcoming open house.

Public Comment – Resident Victoria Wollaston advised she brought a letter and wanted it read. The letter begins by advising that her property taxes are being paid. She wanted to know a date when the curb in front of her home at 212 E. Christian Street would be repaired as she has been asking for over 20 years. She advised it is hazardous. She enclosed a quotation she received from a contractor to fix the curb and believed the town could better afford repair rather than a lawsuit. Mayor Spencer replied that while the town is beginning to get money, the town is also still recovering from a significant revenue loss from 2017 when the police budget was completely out of control. Taxes were raised to offset the increased trash expense, not to repair curbs. He empathized as his curbs are also in disrepair. He could not offer a “drop dead” date and did not think repairing curbs on Christian Street took priority over repairs needed on E. Ayre Street. He asked Code Official Frank Walker what his opinion was as he rides around town every day. Code Official Walker replied that swales were needed on E. Ayre Street and he saw merit in individuals being afraid of getting hurt, so he saw both sides. Mayor Spencer appreciated the letter and said the town would do the best it could to get the curbs repaired. Ms. Wollaston said this has been going on for 25 years. Robert Harvey, Maintenance Supervisor, noted that we have already have a list of streets according to condition to prioritize repair. Code Official Walker made a suggestion to just put the swales in on E. Ayre Street right now as that would preserve the street for a while longer. Mayor Spencer asked Supervisor Harvey to evaluate the curb conditions around town.

Town Manager’s Report – A review of how business has been taking place due to Covid-19. Looking at possible enhancements being made to the municipal building and Old Town Hall courtesy of the CARES Act. Met with a media consultant to consider audio/visual and teleconference options. No election due to third candidate dropping out. Reorganization meeting in July for Commissioner Gretz and Commissioner Czerwinski. \$50,000 was transferred from capital to general fund to support payroll. Commissioner Gretz asked about the town’s portion of the CARES Act and how that was determined – it is based on population. The CARES Act will not replace lost revenue but will cover Covid-related expenses.

Police Chief's Report – Chief Wohner advised that he did direct officers to not be proactive in stopping vehicles as during the pandemic because if we lost an officer due to the illness, it would have been catastrophic for our small department. He did direct officers to be seen. Social distancing was followed during calls to homes. Reports for February, March, April and May were included in the packet.

Alderman's Report - \$10,971 court fines, May, 2020. Reports for February, March, April, and May were included in packet. Court sessions began again in June and the court process was explained as it was suggested that court be brought back to the Old Town Hall.

Maintenance Report – Quarterly street sweeping will be occurring. Lighting has been a problem at the boat ramp, so Tusi Electric has been working on the fix. Commissioner MacDonald asked about cutting grass ramp at Christian/Walnut.

Code Enforcement – 309 E. Justis. Attorney next door is upset and code has done all that he can do. He suggested boarding it up so no one can get in. Discussed hiring a landscaper to initially take the lawn down. Mayor Spencer stated that he discussed the matter at length with Solicitor Griffiths and there is a plan to move ahead on this property.

Commissioners – Commissioner Gretz alerted council that she was approached by a girl next to the masonic that a teenaged boy was seen looking in Commissioner Gretz's bedroom window and car and looking into other people's cars as well. She noted that her boyfriend witnessed him in broad daylight looking into people's cars. Officer Mitchell took the initial report.

Mayor Spencer commented that he and Town Manager King listened in to feedback regarding the Newport Transportation Study. There was a workshop in January and it took several months to compile the results of the forum. The study area was broader than he liked and the further out it moves, the less interested he is. Election – the town manager will reach out to people who expressed interest in assisting with this election to see if they would still be willing to help out for next year. With Vice Mayor Joswick absent, the two old business items will be tabled.

New Business – no election.

Maintenance Supervisor Harvey asked about the stalled bridge work. Mayor Spencer said it was rockfish spawning.

Mayor Spencer made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner MacDonald seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 7:39 pm.